

Pruning and propagating civic behaviour: three *feste* in and around Santa Maria della Vittoria in Mantua, 1495-97

Abstract:

The Gonzaga of Mantua, in common with other ruling houses, were accustomed to utilising the occasions of religious feasts to promote social cohesion, civic pride and dynastic loyalty. This paper examines three such festive celebrations, to show how the Marquis of Mantua, Francesco II, and his court advisors could turn them to Gonzaga advantage.

Each year on the Feast of the Ascension, the population of Mantua was swollen with pilgrims drawn to the city to venerate the relic of the Most Precious Blood of Christ held in the church of Sant' Andrea. The processional route passed by the house of a Jew, lying somewhat apart from the city's Jewish ghetto. With permission, the Jew had removed from its exterior a fresco of the Virgin, Christ Child and saints. During the vigil of Ascension Day 1495, stirred by anti-Jewish sentiment, the processing crowd erupted into a riot in which the Jew's house was vandalised.

To compensate for the removal of the holy image, despite his having secured prior consent, the unfortunate Jew was made to pay the expenses of having a new painting made, the *Madonna della Vittoria* by Andrea Mantegna, today displayed in the Louvre. The painting was a votive altarpiece, to give thanks to the Virgin for having saved the marquis in battle and his victory at Fornovo on 6 July 1495. On the twelve-month anniversary of the battle, a lavish commemoration was organised, whereby the finished canvas was solemnly processed through the streets of Mantua from Mantegna's house to Santa Maria della Vittoria, a little church hurriedly erected to receive the painting on the site of the expunged fresco. A sermon was preached in front of the altarpiece on the street outside, the portrait of Francesco allegedly moving everyone to tears.

The following year, in 1497, Francesco brought forward by four days the commemoration of his victory to coincide with the Feast of the Visitation, thus grafting his temporal triumph onto an assured, sacred ritual, to be annually inscribed in the city's fabric.

Keywords: Francesco II Gonzaga, Andrea Mantegna, Mantua, processions, Battle of Fornovo

Pruning and propagating civic behaviour: three *feste* in and around Santa Maria della Vittoria in Mantua, 1495-97

Fifteenth-century Europe witnessed a focusing upon formal, ritual behaviour unparalleled in earlier history. It was during the reign of Francesco II Gonzaga, fourth marquis of Mantua (1484-1519), that the Gonzaga court confirmed its position as one of the great cultural centres of renaissance Italy. The Gonzaga, in common with other ruling houses, were accustomed to utilising urban space as a theatre for civic display and appropriating the occasions of religious feasts to promote social cohesion, civic pride and dynastic loyalty.¹ This chapter examines three such festive celebrations, to show how Francesco and his court advisers could turn these to Gonzaga advantage. It thus makes a micro-historical examination of little over a three-year period within a specific locale and political context, in the light of a broader literature on the relationship between *popolani* and elites in civic ritual in early modern Europe.² It is shown that the three *feste* played a temporal role in the affirmation of civic order in Mantua from the late-*quattrocento*, although associated ritual has not survived to the present day; it is here historically reconstructed. Methodologically based in textual analysis alongside ethnographic considerations, it demonstrates how festivals are arenas of political agency but at the same time have the potential to slip out of control through voices of dissent. Ritual urban spaces constitute sites for such a dialectic. Finally, it is observed that renaissance masters of ceremony³ had an implicit understanding of tropes of human behaviour later identified by Elias Canetti in his psychopathological study, *Crowds and Power*.⁴

The Context for the Ascension Day Parades of 1495

Each year on the Feast of the Ascension (*la festa dell'Ascensione*), swarms of pilgrims were drawn to Mantua to venerate the relic of the most precious blood of Christ (*il preziosissimo*

sangue) housed in Leon Battista Alberti's magnificent renaissance pilgrim church of Sant' Andrea, the relic reputedly brought to Mantua by Longinus, the soldier who had pierced Christ's side as he hung on the cross. According to legend, Longinus collected the blood-soaked earth from beneath the cross, burying this sacred relic in a pyx on the site where Mantua now stands. Inspired by St Andrew the Apostle, the relic of the holy blood was retrieved and a church erected in Andrew's name.⁵ In the medieval and early modern period, the dignity of any place was customarily measured according to the number and importance of its holy relics. These, furthermore, were believed to have the ability to perform miracles, bringing about, *inter alia*, healing, levitation and holy apparitions.⁶ In those times the Holy Spirit was not believed to be diffused throughout the whole earthly atmosphere, however it could be accessed—it was thought—through power-laden objects, such as the bread and wine of the Eucharist, religious images and effigies of saints. To be in the presence of a sacred relic was to have a direct and open line of communication with God, without the need of cleric as intermediary. Sites housing sacred relics thus took on special cultural agency as gateways to the divine, deriving large economic benefits from miracle-seeking visitors. The principles, moreover, for demonstrating discernment of a supernatural presence were known to literate and illiterate alike, women and men, clergy and laity. The public readily participated, for example, in the shedding of communal tears; these were the visible manifestation of invisible emotions, an outward communication of the inner movement of the heart in response to an unearthly power.⁷ The Gonzaga were well aware of the cultural capital to be derived from possession of a holy relic, one of the most important signs of honour and dignity, the ritual associated with which endowed a place and its inhabitants with a civic life, structure and an identity.⁸ Upheld by the Gonzaga, the relic of the holy blood was annually exhibited to the populace on Ascension Day, the feast thus being co-opted as an instrument of social cohesion between city and state.⁹

In Mantua, Ascension Thursday was preceded on the previous three days by rogation parades which traditionally circumambulated the boundaries of the parish.¹⁰ These had been decreed by Pope Pius II during his stay in the city for the Congress of Mantua (1459-60), the third rogation parade to culminate in Sant'Andrea.¹¹ The processional route passed near to the house of a Jewish family, lying somewhat apart from the city's Jewish ghetto.¹² The Jew, Daniele di Leone da Norsa (d.1504), head of a prominent local banking family, had received permission in 1491 to return to Mantua from Villafranca and had been granted money-lending rights.¹³ Daniele had bought the property on the Via di San Simone (present day Via Fernelli) in 1493 for the sum of 200 ducats.¹⁴ The exterior facade of the building had been adorned, as was the tradition, with a frescoed image of the Madonna and Christ Child with attendant saints, which Daniele had expunged—with permission—because he feared that he himself should be blamed 'if these figures were damaged by other persons'.¹⁵ The erasure, however, had offended local Christian sensibilities, and graffiti insulting Daniele and the Jews had been scrawled over the walls of his house.

Vigil of the Feast of the Ascension, 27 May 1495

During the rogation parade on the day preceding the Feast of the Ascension 1495, specifically 27 May, the long line of people processing along the narrow streets, on sight of Daniele's graffitied house and stirred by anti-Jewish sentiment, erupted into an unruly riot, Daniele accused of blasphemy. Stones were hurled at Daniele's windows, the door was broken down and the building and its contents were badly vandalised.¹⁶ Daniele was absent at the time but immediately upon returning petitioned for Francesco Gonzaga's protection, pointing out that the removal of the image of the Madonna had been licensed by the See of Mantua,¹⁷ whose bishop, indeed, was Francesco's uncle, Ludovico. The perceived act of desecration—the whitewashing of the Madonna and Child—perpetrated on a property outside the Jewish

ghetto and recently acquired from a Christian by a Jew, proved a provocative combination. Fortunately, Mantua's captain of the guard, Iacopo da Capua was on hand to intervene and restore order.¹⁸ This third rogation day concluded a short distance away at Sant' Andrea, where mass was said by the Bishop 'dressed in his pontificals, with all the dignity of the cathedral [i.e. San Pietro]', and attended by the principals of the city and 'an infinite quantity of people'.¹⁹ For the benefit of the large numbers of ultramontane pilgrims, parts of the service were conducted in Latin. The crescendo of the day was reached when the congregation was shown the relic of the Holy Blood, presented under a *baldacchino*²⁰ fittingly held aloft by members of the house of Gonzaga, the relic finally being blessed, accompanied, as was customary, by the canticle *Te Deum laudamus*.²¹ At an equivalent moment in Rome in 1465—a public appearance of the relic of Saint Andrew's head—Pope Pius II recorded in his autobiographical *Commentaries* that there was no-one who did not weep:

... there was profound silence except for the sobs of those who beat their breasts and could not control their tears.²²

The parading of the *preziosissimo sangue* in Sant' Andrea would likely have elicited a similar response from the assembled worshippers.

The urban fabric of Mantua during the Ascension Day parades offered itself up as a canvas on which could be inscribed the prevailing culture, namely here that associated with the local cult of the precious blood of Christ. Pius had declared that the relic should not be 'hidden away'; conversely, its public display each year should be incorporated into the Ascension Day processions.²³ The Gonzaga could thus imbue a commonly acknowledged, calendrical holy day with a particular, local inflection, to which the Mantuan population responded. Ritual participation helped consolidate a sense of civic identity and social

cohesion, a communal affirmation of the political status quo. Conversely, processions could easily, as happened here, slip into disorder, the streets becoming a ‘resonating box for public dissension’.²⁴ This was most common in times of famine, when hunger could kindle violence and alternative counter-spectacles. During the same year in Mantua, bread riots had broken out owing to the high price of cereals.²⁵ In this instance, though, the flash point was local antisemitism.²⁶

«figure 1 here»

To compensate for the obliteration of the holy image formerly adorning his house, despite his having secured prior consent, the unfortunate Daniele was made to pay the considerable expenses of having a new painting made. During the Ascension Day parades, Francesco Gonzaga, *condottiere*, was absent from the city, engaged in leading his Italian troops into battle against the retreating French army of King Charles VIII, following the latter’s conquest of Naples. Francesco was kept abreast of home affairs via correspondence with his consort, Isabella d’Este, and his court advisers. Francesco’s original simple instruction commanding Daniele to have the figure of the Virgin repainted without delay ‘as richly and handsomely as possible’, soon escalated in scale, ultimately resulting in the large canvas of the *Madonna della Vittoria* by Andrea Mantegna, today displayed in the Louvre (Fig. 1).²⁷ This resultant painting was, finally, a votive altarpiece, to give thanks to the Virgin for having delivered the marquis from harm and for his self-styled ‘victory’ against the French at the Battle of Fornovo on 6 July 1495, a bloody affair that took place thirty kilometres south-west of Parma, both parties presenting themselves as the winning side. Francesco’s rather questionable ‘victory’, outside the scope of this paper, was seized upon to bolster Francesco’s reputation, both locally and further afield, in a ‘multi-media’ popularity campaign after ten years of otherwise unspectacular rule: series’ of murals were

commissioned and bronze portrait medals were cast to disseminate Francesco's triumph.²⁸

This programme included the appropriation of Daniele da Norsa's house on Via di San Simone, the site of the expunged fresco, and the swift erection there of a little votive church, Santa Maria della Vittoria (Fig. 2).

«figure 2 here»

Before turning attention to events on the twelve-month anniversary of the Victory of Fornovo, 6 July 1496, short consideration will be paid to the construction and dating of the *chiesetta* and a summary of the altarpiece. In his *Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari credits Mantegna himself with the 'instructions and design' of the little church.²⁹ The attribution has proved problematic because of the building's late-gothic architecture, which is completely at odds with the *all'antica* style ushered in by Alberti since his sojourn in Mantua in 1459, indeed at odds with Mantegna's own classicizing taste. While acknowledging the almost incredible rate of building that must have ensued for the small church to be ready by the twelve-month anniversary, scholars have generally accepted at face value Vasari's account.³⁰ More recently, Mantuan architectural historian, Carlo Togliani has proposed an alternative unfolding of events, whereby building took place in three stages. He points out that it was common practice at that time to begin building churches at the presbytery, the eastern end destined to house the main altar, later construction progressing sporadically—as and when funds became available—extending from east to west.³¹ Whatever the case, primary sources overwhelmingly refer to the little *chiesetta* as 'new'.³² Whether or not the church in 1496 looked akin to its appearance today, Santa Maria della Vittoria certainly housed an altar on which Mantegna's painting was destined to stand.

By early August 1495, Mantegna was already receiving instructions from Sigismondo Gonzaga, Francesco's brother, about the painting that would become the *Madonna della*

Vittoria as we know it today (Fig. 1). The organising principle of the altarpiece is a garden arch set in the open air, the background filled with images of floating clouds and birds in flight. This pergola, abundant with greenery, flowers, fruits, colourful birds, coral, glass and strings of beads, has been described as ‘one of Mantegna’s loveliest inventions’.³³ The viewer’s gaze, immediately drawn to the focal point of the Virgin and Child,³⁴ is next directed, via their respective pose, gesture and gaze, down and to the left, to the kneeling figure of Francesco Gonzaga, dressed in resplendent ceremonial armour, his hands together in prayer and his eyes uplifted. Unusually, he is represented without intercessory saint (St Francis), instead under the direct protection of the Virgin Mary, her extended, foreshortened hand reminiscent of that in Leonardo’s unfinished *Madonna of the Rocks* (1483), which Mantegna could have seen in Milan.³⁵ The standing saint on the left behind the marquis can be identified as St Michael the Archangel. Balancing him in the composition on the right-hand side, also shown in armour and holding a broken lance, is St George, the two warrior saints symbolising the vanquishing of evil. Just visible behind Saints Michael and George are Saints Andrew and Longinus respectively, both (as mentioned) of particular local significance in Mantua. Indeed, the sacred vase containing the relic of the Holy Blood appears regularly on Gonzaga coinage: painted vases can still be seen in the extant fresco fragments on the walls of the (since-deconsecrated) church of Santa Maria della Vittoria.³⁶ The absence, finally, from the altarpiece of Isabella d’Este—one would expect to see her opposite to her husband—is anomalous, as Luzio commented as long ago as 1899 and others have done since, substituted as she is by her patron saint Elizabeth and the infant John the Baptist.³⁷ After many iconographical alterations along the way, this is how the painting appeared on the first anniversary of the Battle of Fornovo.

The twelve-month anniversary of the Victory of Fornovo, 6 July 1496

«figure 3 here»

To celebrate the twelve-month anniversary of the so-called victory, Francesco's court advisers and his consort Isabella organised a spectacular commemoration, whereby the finished canvas of the *Madonna della Vittoria* was processed through the streets of Mantua from Mantegna's house to the eponymous *chiesetta* (Fig. 3, in green). The *marchese* was again away from Mantua on military business but from the detailed letters written to him describing the celebrations, even making allowance for exaggeration, one gains a vivid impression of its joyous magnitude, 'with such a great number of people, men and women, as never before been seen in Mantua'.³⁸ The procession was followed;

... by all the religious of this city and by the very reverend Monsignor protonotary, together with all the populace, jubilant every one, and such a great number of people there that I have never in any other procession of this land seen more, nor so many well turned out.³⁹

The event took on the character of a substitute triumphal procession that might have been led by the victorious commander, but for his continued absence, his image in the altarpiece—three-quarter life-size and dressed in full military regalia—effectively taking Francesco's place.⁴⁰ It is to be borne in mind that through the 1490s Mantegna's nine huge canvases depicting *The Triumphs of Caesar* were being proudly shown to family, friends and visiting dignitaries and would be on full display in the courtyard of the Gonzaga palace on the occasion of a banquet to be held there in January 1497.⁴¹

«figure 4 here»

Mantegna's house was, and is, opposite to Alberti's *all'antica* church of San Sebastiano, the building of which was begun in 1460 under Ludovico Gonzaga and actively promoted by Francesco, Ludovico's grandson, following his accession.⁴² From Mantegna's house, the painting began its journey to its intended destination. Positioned, at the start of the day, as the centrepiece of a *tableau vivant*, the altarpiece was surrounded by youths dressed up as apostles, prophets and angels, all crowned by a living 'God the Father'. In front of it were gathered the twelve 'Apostles'.⁴³ This conforms to the growing trend of theatricality being integrated into fifteenth-century urbanism. Indeed, Francesco was an avid patron of theatre and public music.⁴⁴ One can imagine the cortege setting off through the streets in the manner depicted in the late fifteenth-century engraving of *The Triumph of the Eternity after Petrarch* (Fig. 4). Carried by twenty porters and accompanied by the 'holy figures' and singing 'angels',⁴⁵ the cumbersome apparatus made its way through the streets to Santa Maria della Vittoria. The routes for such processions were customarily embellished with tapestries, flags, banners, strewn flowers, fragrant herbs and hung branches.⁴⁶ Pius II records processional routes that were 'thronged with people and strewn with fresh grasses' and the houses 'carpeted with precious fabrics'.⁴⁷ In Mantua, the exterior, domestic Virgin and Child frescoes on *palazzo* facades were illuminated by candles and decorated with colourful blooms.⁴⁸ The roads, lined with the eager faces of citizens and workers drawn in from the countryside around, watched the slow progress of Mantegna's altarpiece amidst its 'holy' custodians, followed by all of the city's clergy and confraternities.⁴⁹ The latter had come to be one of the most characteristic features of festive ritual. A Florentine contemporary records the participation of:

[...] many companies of secular men, each of which goes before the order [of the church] where that company meets. There are [men] dressed as angels, and music and instruments of every type and marvellous songs⁵⁰

The medieval and renaissance processional form was a microcosm of society, ranked in strict hierarchical order.⁵¹ In his *Pontificale Romanum*, Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini, clerk of papal ceremonies for twenty years, describes in great detail the precise order of those moving off in procession.⁵² The Florentine source, cited above, records as well the ceremonial garb of the clergy:

And this does not count the marvellous richness of their habits, nor the very rich robes they wear on their backs [...]: vestments of gold and of silk and of embroidered figures.⁵³

As Canetti observes, ‘the movements of the priests in their stiff, heavy canonicals, their measured steps’ is ‘the element in any religion which has the most immediate effect on an assembly of believers’.⁵⁴

The procession edged from the periphery (Fig. 3, green route, south to north) towards the heart of Mantua, turning left (along present-day Via Carlo Poma and Via G. Carducci), before striking along the wide arterial road (today’s Corso Vittorio Immanuele) that regularly hosted the city’s *palio*.⁵⁵ Isabella, heavily pregnant, watched the passing of the procession from her brother-in-law’s *palazzo* on this thoroughfare.⁵⁶ Eventually arriving at the *chiesetta*, festooned with fresh garlands both inside and out, the altarpiece was positioned on a temporary, exterior altar on the *piazzetta* of San Simone.⁵⁷ The crowds pressing in, mass was said, followed by a sermon preached in front of the painting by Isabella’s own confessor, Fra Pietro da Canneto. The participants were moved to ‘pray together with one voice’ for the continued salvation of Francesco, his lifelike portrait in the altarpiece allegedly moving the congregation to tears (Fig. 1),⁵⁸ preacher and audience manipulating each other in an ebb and flow of heightened spirituality.⁵⁹ Sigismondo reported to his brother the great love and

admiration that were kindled in his subjects. As was usual, in other centres subject to Gonzaga rule smaller-scale events mirrored this elaborate performance.⁶⁰

Francesco was informed that the procession was the largest, most extravagant occasion in the city since his own marriage to Isabella in 1490.⁶¹ The attendant crowds are explained, not by the fame of Mantegna or religious sentiment, but by ‘patriotic fever’.⁶² Within hours, and for successive days, votive candles and gifts were placed around the painting, now installed on the high altar of the little church.⁶³ Francesco’s biographer Molly Bourne, having analysed all of these accounts, concludes from them that, ‘Santa Maria della Vittoria and its altarpiece, ostensibly commissioned in gratitude to the Virgin, served as the nexus of a thinly veiled program of adulation for the marquis’.⁶⁴ Here in Mantua, as elsewhere through fifteenth-century Europe, urban festival was deployed as a means by which to galvanise civic identity and social cohesion, united under its sovereign lord, through shared experience in the ritual life of the city.

The Feast of the Visitation, 2 July 1497

The following year, in 1497, Francesco brought forward by four days the commemoration of his victory at Fornovo to coincide with the Feast of the Visitation (*la festa della Visitazione*), the second day of July, thus grafting his temporal triumph onto an assured, sacred ritual.⁶⁵ The marquis consolidated this with a further decree to ensure categorically that this would be put into practice annually:

The Feast of the Visitation of Saint Elizabeth, which is today, the second of July, being held in great regard and esteem by members of the Church, our most Illustrious Marquis of Mantua, remembering that this date is near to the day on which, by the grace of our glorious Lady, he was saved from mortal danger and granted victory

against the French, in commemoration of which the Mantuan church of Santa Maria della Vittoria was founded, His Excellency has decided, in order to honor both days, to transfer to today's date the commemoration of the aforesaid victory, which should be celebrated with a solemn procession.⁶⁶

The origin of renaissance pageantry was, after all, the liturgy of the medieval church, mirroring a world picture centring on God and in which the ruler was still professedly on the periphery. Although by 1500 secular court festivals were growing in prominence, the balance was still heavily in favour of the church.⁶⁷ The marquis ordered that the sacred rite should be celebrated by all the secular and regular clergy, preceded by all the guilds of the city, bearing their banners (*gonfaloni*).⁶⁸ The eighteenth-century, Mantuan chronicler, Federigo Amadei comments that this strategy of performing a solemn, public procession from the cathedral of San Pietro to the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria 'every year in perpetuity' was specifically 'to eternalise the memory of this deed [the victory at Fornovo] for posterity'.⁶⁹ The procession (Fig. 3, red route, east to west) set out from the *duomo*'s Chapel of Santa Maria dei Voti (today's Chapel of the Coronation), moving through the wide open space of Piazza San Pietro (now Sordello), which would become the main locus of future spectacles of the Gonzaga dukes. Notwithstanding that the Visitation was a religious feast, the fact that it was also a commemoration of Fornovo may have justified the erection of an ephemeral, classicizing, triumphal arch at the juncture of Piazza San Pietro (today's Sordello) and Piazza Broletto.⁷⁰ A forest of such structures had sprung up in Rome in 1492 for the *posse* of Alexander VI, setting in train a vogue for such festival architecture across the peninsula.⁷¹ Passing in front of the Palazzo della Ragione (the town hall) to its left, the procession progressed through Piazza delle Erbe, turning right at its far end. Here it moved towards its destination, the little votive church of the *Vittoria*, passing along the majestic facade of Sant'Andrea, Alberti's huge, triumphal-arched form dwarfing the moving line of

people below.⁷² Along the designated route frescoed representations were commissioned to decorate the exteriors of the grand *palazzi*, showing Francesco giving thanks to the Virgin, his trusty steed at his side, visually underscoring the commemorative aspect of this holy day.⁷³

Already, earlier in the century, urban spaces were being cleared and widened to make way for processions. At Viterbo, for example, for the feast of Corpus Domini to take place on 17 June 1462, the ceremonial route from the Rocca of San Francesco to the cathedral of San Lorenzo was cleared of unwanted obstructions, as recorded by Pius II:

... [the Pope] gave orders first of all that the street leading from the citadel through the city to the cathedral, which was cluttered with balconies and galleries and disfigured with wooden porticoes, should be cleared and restored to its original splendour.

Everything that jutted out and obstructed the view of the next house was removed and everywhere the proper width of the street was restored. Whatever was removed was paid for from the public funds.⁷⁴

Pius had earlier engaged local interest in grand ceremony when he, the curia and European princes or their ambassadors gathered in the city for the Congress of Mantua, from which the city reaped enormous prestige. Lasting for eight months (from June 1459 to January 1460), processions became commonplace.⁷⁵ The congress was the occasion when Alberti, amongst the papal entourage, was approached by Ludovico Gonzaga to design San Sebastiano and other architectural and sculptural undertakings for the city, and gave rise to the meeting between the famous antiquarian and Mantegna.⁷⁶ These projects contributed to an evolving plan to up-grade the city's urban spaces, both sacred and secular, to display the central role of the Gonzaga. Francesco's own keen interest in urban design is evidenced by his pioneering commissioning of four decorative mural cycles of bird's eye city-views to embellish his

family palaces. The most extensive of these map programmes was completed at his residence at Gonzaga between 1493 and 1494, the Room of the Cities (*Camera de la Città*) featuring eight urban landscapes, including Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice and Genoa. The *marchese* was uncompromising in his insistence on cartographic exactitude.⁷⁷

Attention to urban layout and increasing civic ritual through the *quattrocento* were integrally inter-linked. The end of the century marked a turning point, in which basic ephemeral festive structures of medieval performance evolved into elaborate edifices and urban space became more than a backdrop, the architecture itself becoming intrinsic to the spectacle. Medieval structures were cleared in order to create cleaner perspectives and centres were remodelled after the classical antique, punctuated by triumphal arches as space markers.⁷⁸ The renaissance city was likened to a living organism; as Francesco di Giorgio Martini stated in his *Trattato di architettura* (c. 1482), ‘The relation of the city to its parts is similar to that of the human body to its parts; the streets are the veins’.⁷⁹ Besides showcasing the virtue of magnificence, ceremonial staged in time and space bound together patron and populace in a kinaesthetic performance in living union with the urban fabric.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The three *feste* under discussion, taking place respectively on 27 May 1495, 6 July 1496 and 2 July 1497, share two basic characteristics; each features a grand procession and each has a connection with a particular site on Via di San Simone. Yet these occasions were quite distinctive in terms of route and function. The Ascension Day rogation parade of 1495 was an occasion of particular local importance because it culminated in the veneration in Sant’ Andrea of Mantua’s precious relic of the Holy Blood. The procession is of particular interest in this paper because of an act of civic disobedience that occurred along the way, one which ravaged the home of a Jewish money-lender, putting in motion a series of unforeseen

developments. Within little over thirteen months, these would see the transformation of the Jew's house into a small church, which would display an impressive votive altarpiece, and which itself would become the destination point of future processions.

The second occasion considered here was part of a massive propaganda campaign to raise the profile of Mantua's political leader, the *marchese* Francesco II Gonzaga, and simultaneously to enhance social cohesion, loyalty and civic pride. The pretext for this was the transportation through the streets of Mantegna's *Madonna della Vittoria*, a sort of substitute for a triumphal procession that might otherwise have been led by the victorious—though absent—marquis. The Gonzaga court advisers show themselves to have well understood what Canetti later identifies as the unifying effect of a large number of people directed forward in movement to a common destination.⁸¹ Fra Pietro da Canneto's climactic sermon in front of the altarpiece, bearing Francesco's handsome portrait, seems to have achieved its desired effects: heightened communal emotion, votive offerings to the Virgin for saving Francesco, and adulation of his person. The third procession on 2 July 1497 set in train an annual reminder in public consciousness of the reason for the second, approximately twelve months earlier: a commemoration of the victory at Fornovo. This was now grafted onto a religious feast day, in an age when dates in the year were as a matter of course understood by reference to holy days. Significantly, the processional route for this latter now took the populace into or past all of the city's main sites of religious and political importance: the *duomo*, the Gonzaga's Palazzo Ducale, the three contiguous *piazze*, the Palazzo della Ragione, the pilgrimage church of Sant'Andrea and the votive *chiesetta* of Santa Maria della Vittoria. This pattern mirrors that of civic identity-formation that Richard Trexler so aptly described in his seminal study of ceremonial in renaissance Florence:

Communal and citizen personality did not result from mere doing; one had to insert oneself into a framework of personal and material values or be placed there by some more powerful individual or group. Ritual was a demonstration of being but also the stage of becoming, the very working out of personal and civil order and structure. It is this combination of ritual required for showing a given order, and ritual manipulated by participants to increase their own personality by augmenting that of the social order, that characterises self-governing urban society in pre-absolutistic Europe.⁸²

Though Mantua was a marquisate rather than a republic, as was Florence, the role of festive processions was directly comparable. To that end, new value was placed on the clarity of urban structure as, and for, the representation of the hierarchy of renaissance society.

The arboricultural vocabulary employed in this paper—of pruning, propagating and grafting—seem apt metaphors for facets of the three *feste* under discussion. By the time, however, that the great court engineer and master of ceremonies, Gabriele Bertazzolo (1570-1626) was devising his sophisticated pyrotechnics, hydraulics and theatrical scenography for the secular extravaganzas of the Gonzaga dukes,⁸³ the Visitation celebrations may have withered into comparative insignificance, if they survived at all. If the extinction of the dynasty in 1708 did not lay to rest memories of Francesco's victory at the Battle of Fornovo, then certainly the Napoleonic conquest of Mantua did. Mantegna's altarpiece was confiscated in 1797 and has thereafter remained in Paris, apparently never to be returned. The *chiesetta* of Santa Maria della Vittoria was deconsecrated at that time, and remains so to this day. The little, gothic, brick-built church lay empty for nearly a century, then was converted to be used first as a military warehouse and afterwards as a sculptor's studio and a machinist's workshop.⁸⁴ Its former significance as a locus of renaissance spectacle naturally

faded from public consciousness. Happily, over the course of the last two decades, the interior and exterior of the building have been the subject of various funding appeals and restoration campaigns. The previously whitewashed walls now reveal what remains of the original frescoed decoration.⁸⁵ The ground floor of the ex-*chiesetta* is available for public, private and corporate use,⁸⁶ while a full-sized reproduction of Mantegna's *Madonna della Vittoria* hanging on the east wall reminds visitors of the glory that once adorned its altar. Thanks to the dedicated efforts in local archives of those such as the Mantuan historian, Attilio Portioli (1830-91), so much of the history of the church and its altarpiece has been handed down to posterity and its story is today re-told.⁸⁷ The Via di San Simone and the streets and squares of Mantua, meanwhile, are no longer witness to the cultivation of processions, neither great trees nor even tiny saplings.⁸⁸

Susan Janet May

Birmingham School of Art

Birmingham City University

The essential contents of this paper were delivered at Architecture, Festival and the City, 14th Architectural Humanities Research Association International Conference, Birmingham City University (BCU), November 2017, with generous assistance from the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, BCU. My sincere thanks go to Speranza Galassi and Vanna Rubini of the Amici di Palazzo Te e Musei Mantovani for facilitating a visit to the ex-*chiesetta* of Santa Maria della Vittoria and the Scuola Materna Strozzi e Valenti Gonzaga. My gratitude goes also to Chiara Pisani, Luisa Rodella and Irma Pagliari of the Conservatore Musei Civici di Mantova, Comune di Mantova and to Ylenia Apollonio of the Segreteria Soprintendenza Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Province di Brescia Cremona Mantova for permission to take

photographs. Thanks additionally to Maartje van Gelder, Adrian Hicken, Carlo Togliani, Carolinne White and the anonymous readers and editors of this publication.

¹ On loyalty to old Italian families of the feudal nobility, such as the Gonzaga, see C. M. Ady, ‘Morals and Manners of the Quattrocento’ in *Art and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by George Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 1-18 (p.2).

² For example, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1994); Massimo Rospocher (ed.), *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012); Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); J. R. Mulryne (ed.), *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

³ For studies on renaissance masters of ceremony and *libri cerimoniali*, see for example Richard C. Trexler (ed.), *The libro cerimoniale of the Florentine Republic by Francesco Filarete and Angelo Manfidi* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978); Marc Dykmans, *L'oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini, ou le cérémonial papal de la premiere renaissance*, 2 vols (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980-2); Anna Maria Testaverde, ““Entrate, onoranze, esequie et altre cose”: The book of ceremonies of Francesco Tongiarini (1536-1612)”, in Mulryne, *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 99-112.

⁴ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. by Carol Steward, (London: Phoenix Press, 1960).

⁵ Roberto Capuzzo, ‘Note sulla tradizione e sul culto del Sangue di Cristo nella Mantova medievale’, in Rodolfo Signorini (ed.), *Storia e Arte Religiosa a Mantova* (Belluno: Casa del Mantegna, 1991), pp. 61-72.

⁶ Joe Nickell, *Looking for a Miracle: Weeping Icons, Stigmata, Visions and Healing Cures* (New York: Prometheus, 1993).

⁷ William A. Jr, 'Provoked Religious Weeping in Early Modern Spain', in *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, ed. by John Davis, (London: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 97-114; Rainer Mühhlhoff, 'Affective resonance and social interaction', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 14:4 (2015), pp. 1001-19.

⁸ Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 271.

⁹ Capuzzo, 'Note sull tradizione e sul culto del Sangue di Cristo', pp.61-72. From 1481 a *cappella del sangue di Cristo* existed and by 1494 the reliquaries were deposited in a subterranean *sacello* testifying to the continuance of the cult even though the relics were not obviously displayed as before; G. Pecorati, 'Per un culto pubblico al Preziosissimo Sangue in S. Andrea a Mantova', in Signori (ed.), *Storia e Arte Religiosa a Mantova*, p.57.

¹⁰ Attilio Portioli, 'La chiesa e la Madonna della Vittoria di A. Mantegna in Mantova', *Atti e memorie della R. Accademia Virgiliana di Mantova* (1882-1884), pp. 55-79 (p. 59). Santa Maria della Vittoria is in the *contrada* of *Leopardo* and the *parrocchia* of *San Simone e San Lorenzo*.

¹¹ Ippolito Donesmondi, *Dell'istoria ecclesiastica di Mantova*, 2 vols, (originally Mantua: Aurelio & Lodovico Osanna, 1612), facsimile (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1977), II, p. 16.

¹² The Jewish ghetto was a rectangular block just behind (on the south-easterly side) the Piazza delle Erbe and the rotunda of San Lorenzo.

¹³ Schlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Jerusalem: KTAV Publishing, 1977), pp. 205 n.31, 208.

¹⁴ Portioli, 'La Chiesa' p. 59.

¹⁵ Portioli, 'La Chiesa', pp. 60-1.

¹⁶ Portioli, 'La Chiesa', p. 60; Dana Katz, 'Painting and the Politics of Persecution: Representing the Jew in Fifteenth-Century Mantua', *Art History*, 23:4 (2000), pp. 475-495 (p. 475).

¹⁷ Letter, Daniele Norsa to Francesco Gonzaga, 29 May 1495, Archivio Gonzaga (hereafter AG), Mantua, b. 2447, fol. 137.

¹⁸ Letter from Jacopo da Capua to Francesco Gonzaga, 16 June 1497, AG, F.II.8, b. 2449, fol. 415. The letter is transcribed in Molly Bourne, *Francesco II Gonzaga: the Soldier-Prince as Patron* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008), Doc. 144, p. 400.

¹⁹ 'Poscia venuto il primo Vespro dell'Ascensione, alla preferenza del Vescovo ponteficalmente apparato, con tutte le dignità del Duomo, e dei Prencipi della Città, con un infinita quantità di popolo'; Donesmondi, *Dell'istoria*, II, p. 16.

²⁰ A baldachin, or baldaquin, is a richly ornamented brocade canopy, carried in religious processions over an object of veneration.

²¹ '... fa un ragionamento al popolo parte in Latino (per cagione de gli Oltramontani, che in gran numero sollevano in quei primi tempi convenirvi) e'l rimanente in volgare. Doppo il quale, Monsignor Vescovo celebra solennissimamente il Vespro; e poi mostra questo Santissimo Sangue al popolo (tenendo il Baldachino i Principi, con altri personaggi) e lo benedice da un luogo eminente à questo effetto preparato'; Donesmondi, *Dell'istoria*, II, p. 17.

²² Pius II, 'The Commentaries of Pius II', trans. by Florence A. Gragg, intro. and notes by Leona C. Gabel, in *Smith College Studies in History*, 5 vols (Northampton, MA: Dept of History of Smith College, 1936-57), here Book 8, XXXV (1951), p. 529.

²³ '... non istesse nascosto così gran tesoro, ma che si dovesse mostrare ogn'anno pubblicamente nell'Ascensione del Signore'; Donesmondi, *Dell'istoria*, II, p. 16.

²⁴ Massimo Rospocher, 'The Piazza as Political Space in Renaissance Italy', Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Chicago, 31 March 2017. Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 143-6. For a critique and updating of Jürgen Habermas's model of 'the public sphere', see Massimo Rospocher, 'Habermas goes to hell?', in *Beyond the Public Sphere: A Historiographical Transition*, ed. by Massimo Rospocher (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), pp. 1-28.

²⁵ Dana E. Katz, 'Painting and the Politics of Persecution'; Giuseppe Veltri and Gianfranco Miletto (eds), *Rabbi Judah Moscato and the Jewish Intellectual World of Mantua in the 16th - 17th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 493 n. 24.

²⁶ Katz, 'Painting and the Politics of Persecution'. Jew-hatred in Europe was at its peak during the 15th to the 17th centuries; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich, 1973), 5th edn, p. xi.

²⁷ Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna: With a Complete Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986), pp. 177-84, 438-39.

²⁸ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 38-40, 65, 82-3.

²⁹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori et Architettori nelle Redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi (eds.), 6 vols, (Firenze: Sansoni, 1966-87), III, pp. 546-56 (p. 554).

³⁰ Alessandro Luzio, 'La "Madonna della Vittoria" del Mantegna', *Emporium*, 10 (Nov. 1899), pp. 358-374 (p. 366); Lightbown, *Mantegna*, p. 179.

³¹ According to his research, the third, westerly bay of Santa Maria della Vittoria (that containing the entrance) was constructed and decorated as late as 1514-15; Carlo Togliani, 'Santa Maria della Vittoria e Santo Sepolcro: Nuovi documenti, nuove interpretazione (e attribuzioni)', in *Chiese di congregazioni e ordini religiosi maschili*, ed. Rosanna Golinelli

Berto, *Quaderni di San Lorenzo*, 12 (2014), pp. 23-74 (pp. 34-5, 44-7). Togliani's hypothesis, however, does not sit comfortably with the quattrocentesque visual integrity of the building.

³² Letter 6 July 1496 from Sigismondo Gonzaga in Mantua to Francesco; 'Qui era aparechiato uno solemne altare suso il cantono *de la nova capella* ...' [author's italics], AG, b. 2111, c. 385, transcribed in Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 380-81. Letter 7 July 1496 from Antimaco, *segretario*, in Mantua to Francesco; '... poi sequendo fin a *la nova chiesiola* constructa presso Santo Simone ...', AG, b. 2449, c. 308r-v, transcribed in Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 381-2. Letter 10 July 1496 from Isabella d'Este in Mantua to Francesco; '... et portata cum la processione a *la nova capella* intitullata Sancta Maria de la Victoria ...', AG, b. 2111, cc. 266-7, transcribed in Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 383-4.

³³ Lightbown, *Mantegna*, p.181.

³⁴ For Francesco Gonzaga's special devotion to the Virgin, see Lightbown, *Mantegna*, p.177.

³⁵ János Vég, "'Wunderbar beseelte und reine Gebärde". Die Hände von Leonardos Felsengrottenmadonna', *Acta Historiae Artium*, Vol. 42, 2001, 33-8.

³⁶ On the deconsecration and subsequent fate of the church, see Bourne, *Francesco II Gonzaga*, 80-81.

³⁷ Luzio, 'La "Madonna della Vittoria"', 370.

³⁸ '... cum tanto numero de persone, maschii e femine, che mai non ne fu viste tante in Mantua'; Letter dated 6 July 1496 from Sigismondo Gonzaga to Francesco II, AG, b. 2111, fol. 385, transcribed as Doc. 118 in Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 380-1.

³⁹ '... acompagnata da tutti li religiosi de questa cità et dal reverendissimo monsignore prothonotario, insieme cum tutto il populo, iubillante ogniuno, et tanto numero li fu de persone che io mai in alcuna altra processione di questa terra non ne vidi più, né pur tante a

bon pezzo'; Letter dated 7 July 1496 from Antimaco to Francesco II, AG, b. 2449, fol. 308r-v, transcribed as Doc. 119 in Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 381-2

⁴⁰ Margaret M. McGowan, 'The Renaissance Triumph and its Classical Heritage', in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics and Performance* ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 26-47.

⁴¹ Lightbown, *Mantegna*, p. 426. I am grateful to Adrian Hicken for this observation.

⁴² Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 185-6. On completion of the church, its facade would later bear a large fresco inspired by Mantegna's *Madonna della Vittoria*; *ibid*, p. 186. Mantegna calls his house 'la casa mia da San Sebastiano'; Carlo D'Arco, *Delle arti e degli artefici di Mantova*, 2 vols (Mantua: Giovanni Agazzi, 1857), II, p. 31.

⁴³ Lightbown, *Mantegna*, p. 180. See Eamonn Canniffe, *The Politics of the Piazza: The History and Meaning of the Italian Square* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 86.

⁴⁴ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 21, 211-17.

⁴⁵ See Nicoletta Guidobaldi, 'The Role of Music in Italian Court Festivals in the Early Renaissance', in Mulryne and Golding (eds), *Court Festivals*, pp. 261-70.

⁴⁶ Charles Zika, 'Hosts, processions and pilgrimages: Controlling the sacred in fifteenth-century Germany', *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), pp. 25-64 (p. 42).

⁴⁷ "Pius II" Book 2, Vol. 22 (1936-7) p. 138.

⁴⁸ Portioli, 'La Chiesa', p. 59.

⁴⁹ Portioli, 'La Chiesa', p. 72.

⁵⁰ Cesare Guasti, *Le feste di S. Giovanni Batista in Firenze descritte in prosa e in rima da contemporanei* (Florence: G. Cirri, 1884), p.5. .

⁵¹ Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1984), p. 7; Nicholas Terpstra, 'The Politics of Ritual Kinship', in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Nicholas

Terpstra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-8 (p. 1); Canniffe, *The Politics of the Piazza*, p. 6.

⁵² Compiled under the pontificates of Sixtus IV (1471-84) and Innocent VIII (1484-92), the *Pontificale Romanum* is transcribed in Latin, with commentary in French, in Dykmans, *L'oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini*.

⁵³ Guasti, *Le feste*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, p. 155.

⁵⁵ The route can be discerned from the letter dated 7 July 1496 from Antimaco, *segretario*, to Francesco Gonzaga; AG, b. 2449, fol. 308r-v, transcribed as Doc. 119, Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 381-2.

⁵⁶ Bourne, *Francesco II*, p. 82.

⁵⁷ Portioli, 'La chiesa', p. 72.

⁵⁸ Bourne, *Francesco II*, p. 82; Portioli, 'La chiesa', pp. 72-4; Luzio, 'La "Madonna della Vittoria"', p. 367.

⁵⁹ On such ritual sermons, see Trexler, *Public Life*, pp. 353-4. On collective weeping, Christian, 'Provoked Religious Weeping'.

⁶⁰ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 82-3.

⁶¹ Letter, Baldassare Suardi to Francesco Gonzaga, 10 July 1496, AG, b. 2449, f. 113, cited in Katz, 'Painting and the Politics of Persecution', p. 483. Letter, Antimaco to Francesco Gonzaga, 7 July 1496; Portioli, 'La chiesa', p. 73.

⁶² '... la febbra patriottica', Portioli, 'La chiesa', p. 73.

⁶³ Portioli, 'La chiesa', p. 74.

⁶⁴ Bourne, *Francesco II*, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 84-5; Togliani, 'Santa Maria della Vittoria', pp. 38-39. The biblical account of the Visitation (Luke 1: 36-56) records a meeting between the Virgin Mary

and her cousin, St Elizabeth. Whether the co-opting of this feast date in 1497 was already envisaged as early as the iconographic planning of Mantegna's altarpiece in 1495-6 is a moot point, however it is the case that St Elizabeth—Isabella's patron saint—is pictured there, kneeling opposite to the *marchese*.

⁶⁶ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 84.

⁶⁷ Strong, *Art and Power*, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Togliani, 'Santa Maria', p. 39.

⁶⁹ 'Egli [Francesco] finalmente, per eternare ne' posterì la memoria di questo fatto, ordinò, di consenso del Vescovo Lodovico Gonzaga, suo Zio, che oggi anno in perpetuo, nel giorno 2 di luglio, festa della Visitazione di Maria Vergine, si facesse in Mantova una pubblica solenne processione coll'interventimento del clero secolare e regolare, preceduto da tutte le arti della città, co'loro gonfaloni, la quale spiccandosi dalla cattedrale andasse alla chiesa della Vittoria ed in quella si cantasse la messa in onore della Vergina santissima, la qual pia costumanza tutt'ora osservasi religiosamente'; Federigo Amadei, *Cronica universale della città di Mantova*, II (1955), p. 319.

⁷⁰ The juncture between the two town squares is now marked by the neoclassical stone archway of the Voltone di San Pietro.

⁷¹ Lucia Nuti, 'Re-moulding the city: The Roman *possessi* in the first half of the sixteenth century', in Mulryne (ed.), *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 113-134 (pp. 118-9, 122).

⁷² Togliani, 'Santa Maria', pp. 38-9. The same route was followed, and beyond to the family chapel in San Francesco, for Francesco Gonzaga II's funeral; Giovanni Marcanova, *Quaedam antiquitatum fragmenta* (Modena: Biblioteca Estense, 1967) p. 48.

⁷³ Various attributed to Mantegna, Antonio da Correggio and an anonymous Paduan master; Togliani, 'Santa Maria', p. 38.

⁷⁴ “Pius II” Book 8, Vol 35 (1951) p.551.

⁷⁵ The congress—unsuccessful—was intended to galvanise support for a crusade against the Ottoman Turks by the united forces of Christendom; Pope Pius II, *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope, the Commentaries of Pius II: an Abridgement*, trans. by Florence A Gragg, ed. By Leona C. Gabel (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960) pp. 118-44.

⁷⁶ Barbara Furlotti and Guido Rebecchini, *The Art and Architecture of Mantua* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), p. 45.

⁷⁷ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 229-40. A precedent was Pinturicchio’s cycle of city views painted 1488-90 for Innocent VIII in the Belvedere loggia, the genre however not gaining prominence until the end of the 15th century; *ibid*, p. 231.

⁷⁸ Nuti, ‘Re-moulding the city’, p.130.

⁷⁹ Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings through History*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), p. 52.

⁸⁰ Maarten Delbeke and Minou Schraven (eds), *Foundation, Dedication and Consecration in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p.3. Sarah Bonnemaison and Christine Macy (eds), *Festival Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁸¹ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, p. 29.

⁸² Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 271.

⁸³ See, for example, Gabriele Bertazzolo, *Breve relatione dello sposalitio fatto della serenissima Eleonora Gonzaga con la sacre Cesarea maestà di Ferdinando II Imperatore* (Mantua: Lodovico Osanna, 1622). On the vast corpus of literature printed to commemorate such events, see Strong, *Art and Power*, p. 21.

⁸⁴ Bourne, *Francesco II*, pp. 80-1.

⁸⁵ Ugo Bazzotti, 'La chiesa di S. M. della Vittoria e la pala di Andrea Mantegna', in Rodolfo Signorini (ed.), *A casa di Andrea Mantegna. Cultura artistica a Mantova nel quattrocento* (Milan: Silvana, 2006) pp. 200-19.

⁸⁶ Under the auspices of the Amici del Palazzo del Te. A wooden truss floor inserted during the 1877 conversion separates the building horizontally, the upper storey having been used continually since then as a municipal nursery school, the adjacent Scuola Materna Strozzi e Valenti Gonzaga.

⁸⁷ 'Riapre la chiesa della Vittoria', *Gazzetta di Mantova*, 3 September 2006; 'Visita in notturna agli affreschi della Vittoria', *Gazzetta di Mantova*, 14 August 2014.

⁸⁸ The relic of the Holy Blood is still, however, put on public display on The Feast of the Ascension and Good Friday; conversation with author, Amici del Palazzo del Te, at Santa Maria della Vittoria, 20 April 2017.

Fig. 1. Andrea Mantegna, *The Madonna della Vittoria*, 1496, 285 x 168 cm, Paris: Musée du Louvre (inv. 369). © Fine Art Images/Alinari Archives, Florence.

Fig. 2. Ex-*chiesetta* of Santa Maria della Vittoria, Via di San Simone (present-day Via Fernelli), Mantua. Photo: author.

Fig. 3. Procession on 6 July 1496 from San Sebastiano (opposite Mantegna's house) to Santa Maria della Vittoria (green route, south to north) and annual procession as of 2 July 1497 from San Pietro to Santa Maria della Vittoria (red route, east to west).

Fig. 4. Anon. Florentine, *Triumph of the Eternity after Petrarch*, 1492. London: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings. © Trustees of the British Museum.